

Title:

Think Small And Grow Big!

Word Count:

1543

Summary:

In this evergrowing-techno-jungle we call the Internet, it's easy for the little guys to get overlooked. If you aren't Coca-Cola, Microsoft, or Amazon, it can be hard to compete. Small

businesses are faced with the challenge of standing out in the face of giants. So how do you differentiate and survive? The key is to be SMALL in a big way by capturing the essence of YOU in your web site!

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Keywords:

Article Body:

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businesses are faced with the challenge of standing out in the face of giants. So how do you differentiate and survive? The key is to be SMALL in a big way by capturing the essence of YOU in your web site!

To illustrate my point I'll paint a picture. Imagine that you have a taste for a strawberry milkshake, so you head down to Joe's Ice Cream Parlor. When you walk in, Joe greets you with a smile and asks, "How you doing Sam? Do you want the usual strawberry shake?" You plop yourself down on the barstool and say, "That'd be great!" Joe asks how the wife and kids are. You ask how Joe's business is doing.

Joe pours the milkshake into a tall curved soda glass, pops a straw in, and puts not one, but two cherries on top.

What's good about this picture? It's small at it's best! It's the good ole' days of Mom and Pop stores relived. You know that when you go to Joe's you'll get more than a great milk shake you love, it's the experience of it. And the value

that Joe adds to that milkshake goes a long way toward building and keeping a relationship with that client.

Let's talk about how you capture the "you" and put its power to work in your business?

STOREFRONT

It all starts when you walk into Joe's Ice Cream Shop. The nostalgic look, the music from the jukebox, the real whip cream he tops his milk shakes with. Does your web site have stopping power? If you don't capture the visitor's attention in a few seconds, you've lost their business. Through use of friendly copy, attractive graphics, and color you can add interest and set the tone for your visitors.

MOTTO:

The front door of your web site is the home page. You need to state right at the top of the page: who you are, what you do, and why customers should care!

What is your unique selling point?

Are you friendly? Are you affordable? Are you available 24/7?

Do you have a specialty? Are you a one-stop shop?

Remember those catchy phrases you can't get out of your head:

Bounty, the quicker picker upper... Burger King - we make it your way... Hertz, we try harder.... These are perfect examples of slogans that tell customers immediately WHO you are and WHY you are better than the rest.

WHAT ARE THE SPECIALS?

Joe lists his "soda for the day" right on his menu for all to see.

Similarly, you need to tell visitors about the exciting features your site has to offer. Write home page that reads like a "special of the day" menu telling customers about the free reports, the resources, the products, and other features your site has to offer them.

If you offer a free initial trial or full money back guarantee make it VISIBLE on your home page!

WORDS:

Just as Joe's conversation gave you a warm friendly shopping experience, you can put personality in your web copy to create a friendly visitor experience. Steer clear of web copy that makes you sound like a high-pressure car salesman or a

fancy high profile VP of sales. Instead, write honestly with a personal approach.

Your web site copy (writing) should NOT be a laundry list pulled from your resume or simply listing your services. Instead, tell people in your own words what you have to offer them, how it will help them, how much they will save, how much easier it will make things for them, how convenient you are. Think like a customer and ask, "Why should I buy from this company versus the one down the street?" The answers to THAT will form writing for your web site.

USE OTHERS WORDS:

When your friend George said, "You've GOT to try the Milk Shakes at Joe's. You won't believe how good they are" you were SOLD! There's nothing like a heartfelt testimonial to build trust and credibility. If you don't have a big brand name and the reputation that goes with it, you'd need to give the customer a reason to believe that you or your product does what you promise.

Testimonials do this. And honest words from a happy customer will get you more customers than any high paid advertisement ever will.

A PICTURE IS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS:

Joe always had a way of making you feel right at home in his shop. Similarly, by adding a picture of yourself on the web site, your customers will feel like they know you. The more customers feel they know you, the more likely they will want to do business with you.

If you don't have a good picture of yourself here's some ideas for you. Go to Sears, Glamour Shots, or JC Penny studio and get one taken. If you take "horrible" formal pictures, consider taking one of you "in action" doing what you do. If you teach, consider showing a picture of you working with students. You can even "cut" yourself out of a good casual shot, remove the background, add a shadow, and make a GREAT head shot! See my picture on about us page <http://www.kcustom.com/aboutus.htm>. I take TERRIBLE formal picture because I hate getting my picture taken. This one is of me in KeyWest on my honeymoon. No wonder I look so happy!

If you sell widgets, show a picture of your product on your web site. When people shop in a store they like to feel, touch, and hold the product. Recreate this experience with pictures and visual imagery with words. Don't tell customers that it's "solid leather construction", instead tell them "the seat is made with leather so soft you'll sink right into it"!

MAINTAIN FRIENDLY, RESPONSIVE COMMUNICATION WITH CUSTOMERS

Have you ever gone to a store counter and waited, and WAITED? You could see the store clerk standing up there chatting with her fellow sales clerk. You clear your throat, and try to make eye contact with her, and then FINALLY she comes over and asks, "Can I help you?" This is how your customers feel when they send your business an email and you don't respond right away.

Responses to emails should be timely. If you don't have time to answer someone's question right away, send them a note to tell them you got their inquiry and when they CAN expect an answer.

Go back in your head to the "waiting at the counter" scenario . . . when the clerk says, "I'll be right with you" it sure makes you feel better doesn't it? It tells the customer "You are important to me, I noticed you, and I will help you soon as I can"

OFFER IMPECCABLE SERVICE:

The key to Joe's success at the Ice Cream Shop wasn't just his incredible milk shakes; it was the value he added by adding the extra cherry on top. Promise 8 and deliver 9. What do you do to add value to your business? Give freely of yourself by adding those little extras.

IT'S ALL IN THE PACKAGING:

Somehow milkshakes never taste as good in a paper cup with a plastic lid. And even though the milkshake may cost \$1 extra at Joe's, you don't mind because you know your are getting your money's worth. Think of ways to package your services that are attractive and convenient for your clients. Don't nickel and dime your customers to death. Sometimes \$150 per hour fees can sound pretty scary to clients. Think perhaps about creating a package with a set number of offerings at a set price. You could offer a basic, a deluxe, and the GOLD package. When clients know exactly what to expect, it takes the "fear" out of their purchase.

ANSWERING THE PHONE:

I don't know about you, but there is nothing that impresses me more when I call a customer help number and actually get HUMAN live help! I want a person who listens and understands my problems. I don't want to choose options 1, 2, or 3 and push a button on the phone.

When Joe answers the phone he says "Welcome to Joe's Ice Cream Shop, this is Joe!" What a nice first impression that makes! Smile when you answer, people will hear the difference in your voice.

BE SMALL - BE YOU - You won't believe the difference it makes!

I can tell you from experience that being "myself" is what has built my

business. And everyday as I build web sites for small business owners I help them put a piece of themselves into it. The importance of branding yourself cannot be overstated. Take a look at your own business. Try to look with a different set of eyes.

How do you present yourself? Does my site "feel" like a warm comfortable place to do business OR does your web site look like screaming over-hyped ad or business brochure? Remember the secret to competing with the BIG guys, lies in adding the human touch to your service, your communication, and your web site! Act small for BIG profits!